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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 001952

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/01/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NIGER DELTA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
DISCUSSES CHALLENGES IN DEALING WITH VICE PRESIDENT

REF: ABUJA 1854

Classified By: A/DCM Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

1. (C) Summary: During their three hour September 30 meeting the Ambassador (accompanied by Poloff, notetaker) and Ledum Mitee, Chairman of the new Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), discussed the committee's mandate to review past reports and submit a comprehensive report to the Vice President's office. Mitee said the committee will go beyond this mandate and suggest mid- and long-term benchmarks for states, local governments, and communities. In addition, Mitee would like the committee to work on the disarmament and reintegration of militants into society. In regards to the committee's structure, Mitee said the NDTC has divided its work into several topic areas. The NDTC will discuss its work with the Senate President and the Speaker of the House, and attempt to identify laws that may need to be changed. Vice President Jonathan gave the committee 10 days to complete its work - a time frame Mitee realizes is an extremely unrealistic. He, nonetheless, thought it best to begin the work before asking for an extension. Mitee also noted the political difficulties he is facing in dealing with the Vice President's office both regarding its demonstrated incompetence, and its apparent lack of concern and sense of urgency about the problems in the Niger Delta. He also raised his concerns about the Vice President and his office in regard to their bona fides on Niger Delta issues and on working with Mitee's committee. Mitee recognized that President Yar'Adua must be involved if the report is not to end up as "just another document on the shelf." Mitee also asked for the U.S. Mission's good offices with this access, and with keeping pressure on the GON to support the Committee's work. Post will seek to help the NDTC to prevent yet another stalled Niger Delta process. See septel for details on the NDTC's public outreach; engagement with an array of militants (including "General Boyloaf", Farah Dagogo, and Ateke Tom) and militant-related issues; Mitee's discussion on disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation and his hopes to reintegrate "marginal militants"; and the advice, support, and technical assistance the committee seeks. End Summary.

The Committee's Mandate

2. (C) Mitee professed to the Ambassador that he did not

think he would be the chair of the Niger Delta Technical Committee, and truthfully he had not wanted to be. However, he felt humbled to have been selected and he felt he needed to do something about the many challenges in the Niger Delta.

Mitee said "it doesn't take rocket science" to see what needs to be done, but there is a lack of government will. He hopes that his heading this committee will make a difference.

Mitee said that the committee's mandate was to review past reports and then put together a comprehensive report for the Vice President's office. However, he told the Vice President that a university could put together reports, but that, in general, such reports are out of date as soon as they are published. When asked how he defines the mandate, Mitee said the committee will review reports and then create benchmarks for the mid- and long-term for states, local governments, and communities.

¶3. (C) Mitee asked the Vice President for permission to work on the disarmament and reintegration of militants into society, even though this is not in the committee's mandate (Note: Mitee did not indicate what the VP's response was. End Note). Mitee said he is also thinking about the issue of a possible amnesty for militants, and looking at how amnesty was implemented in other places. He said he told Jonathan that he wanted to be blunt and that he does not trust all the information the GON is getting from its intelligence sources. He also said that he was looking for ways "to create a window" to allow those militants "who are not so hardened to come back to society."

The Committee's Structure

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¶4. (U) Mitee said the Committee has divided its work into several topic areas: law enforcement, critical infrastructure, women and youth, environmental degradation, health education, and resource allocation and regeneration.

¶5. (C) Mitee said that the National Assembly must be involved in the process, and that the technical committee is supposed to meet with the Senate President and the Speaker of the House to discuss the committee's work, and to identify the laws that need to be changed. Mitee told the Ambassador the National Assembly oversees the technical committee, but he said all the National Assembly's committee does is "go after contracts." (Comment: Post understands Mitee's comment to mean that members of the National Assembly are taking advantage of their membership on the committee for rent-seeking purposes. End Comment.)

The Committee's Timeline

¶6. (C) Vice President Jonathan gave the committee 10 days to complete its work. Mitee said he realizes that 10 days is an extremely unrealistic timeline (Comment: to say the least. End comment.), but he has not asked for an extension yet because he wants to begin working first and then request more time. As he said, "a student writing an essay exam does not ask for more paper before he has started to write."

Disconnect Between VP and Presidential Offices

¶7. (C) Mitee observed that the Vice President's office appeared completely disconnected from the President's office; the two do not seem to communicate or coordinate at all. Mitee told the Ambassador that he found the Vice President's office very difficult to work with. Mitee claimed that Nze Akachukwu Nwankwo, Coordinator for the Niger Delta in the Vice President's office, "has baggage" from when he was a consultant for Shell. Mitee alleged that Akachukwu was supposed to help Shell steer investment toward improving communities, but instead used the money to manipulate groups for his own purposes. Mitee said the Vice President knows Akachukwu from their prior business relationship. Mitee opined that the Vice President is only concerned for the

interests of his own Ijaw community. Mitee added that the VP's office has been playing games that impede the technical committee in doing its work, on the one hand granting it resources, such as an office with computers, but after a few days denying it access to these resources.

¶8. (C) Mitee said he has not had any direct contact with the President because he does not want Jonathan to think he is undermining the VP or his office. (Comment: We think more likely that Mitee has been unable to see Yar'Adua because access to the ailing President is being so closely controlled by his inner circle than because Mitee has not tried. End comment.) However, Mitee emphasized that contact with the President will be needed because "political will is the greatest challenge; it is one thing to write a report but another to implement action." Mitee worried that if the President does not heed the committee's report, it "could end up just another document on the shelf." He was clearly concerned that this was exactly what the Vice President was likely to do if the report came to him, since the VP is more concerned with getting his people (the Ijaw) into positions than trying to solve the problems of the Delta. He claimed that the Vice President does not "appreciate the urgency" of the problem.

The New Niger Delta Ministry

¶9. (C) When the Ambassador asked Mitee if he has heard any names floated for the Minister of the Niger Delta, Mitee said that on September 24 (at a meeting in the Vice President's office) he heard the names of Timi Alaibe, former Managing Director of the NDDC, and Godsday Orubebe, Minister for Special Duties in the Presidency. The Ambassador asked about the confusing structure of the proposed new Ministry of the

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Niger Delta. Mitee said that the committee is also concerned by the announced structure of the Ministry, which has both a Minister, who is supposed to focus on infrastructural development, and a Minister of State who will be responsible for youth development and empowerment. He also thought it would be a mistake to include the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) as part of the Ministry, since the Minister would be tempted to exploit it as a source of patronage; instead, it should be an independent federal agency with oversight by the National Assembly, he said.

¶10. (C) Comment: Post knows (from our past dealings with those trying to broker the earlier proposal for a Niger Delta Summit) that the VP's office has no capability to run this process, or any other. Post will seek to help provide the NDTC with good offices and move the process along. Also, given the pressing timeline the Vice President's office has placed on the Niger Delta Technical Committee, we are concerned that, despite Mitee's good intentions, this could be another stalled Niger Delta process unless President Yar'Adua gets more involved. End Comment.

¶11. (U) This cable is coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
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